



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

# THE GREAT REFORMS SECURED IN PENNSYLVANIA.

BY WAYNE MAC VEAGH.

---

WE have been often told that it is the unexpected which happens; and certainly nothing could have been more unexpected to those who, for an entire generation, have been endeavoring to secure the restoration of government by the people to the voters of the imperial Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, than the thoroughgoing and far-reaching changes which have been so unexpectedly introduced there, and which have completely reversed the evil political conditions which for many years have existed in that State.

The readers of this REVIEW were told, in the number for last January, of the overwhelming victory for honest politics which had just been won, not only in the cities of Pittsburg and Philadelphia, but throughout the entire State, and of the overthrow, at the polls, of the corrupt and criminal organization of which the majority masqueraded as Republicans while the minority masqueraded as Democrats, which organizations had so long dishonored Pennsylvania; for the Democratic annex to the Republican organization was quite as corrupt and criminal as that organization itself. In that article, the numerous sources of strength possessed by these so-called organizations were set forth in detail, and it was there declared that:

“It is not the persons, but the system which is the object of attack, and against the system the attack ought to be relentlessly maintained until the last vestige of it is driven out of American politics. ‘Bossism’ has indeed been the curse of our politics for a long while past; and, if ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people’ is to continue, that evil system, leading to all abhorrent forms of debauchery, corruption and degradation of the public service, must absolutely disappear. In striving for its disappearance, however, there is

no need for undue condemnation of those who are responsible for its continuance, if they will abandon their evil ways, and placing themselves upon an equality with all other persons desiring to enter the public service, submit their qualifications to the impartial judgment of the voters; but, with less than that concession, no true friend of honest politics can ever be satisfied."

It was added:

"The confederates of the evil system we are considering ought not to be too severely blamed. The long condition of base and degrading bondage has been slowly doing its evil work upon their character. It had, of course, grown by what it fed upon. Its demoralizing influence had spread into every hamlet of the Commonwealth, for everywhere could be found some person, more or less influential, who was a beneficiary or hoped to be a beneficiary, in one way or other, of this powerful combination; while the country press was generally subsidized by it, so that it seemed chimerical to imagine that men no longer young and tired of the strifes and antagonisms of life, would live to witness the redemption of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania from their low-minded and craven-hearted servitude."

These wise words of Secretary Taft in reference to Ohio were quoted:

"Those who brought about the defeat of the machine cannot afford to lie back on their oars and think they have won a lasting victory. They have merely carried the first entrenchments. What is needed is the earnest attention and work of young men entering politics, with the unselfish desire to make them better, and who will strive for open conventions and a free choice by the people of all candidates for office. Such a victory will not be completed for several years."

Indeed, to thoughtful men, however much encouraged by the splendid result of the strenuous conflict which lasted in Pennsylvania from May to November of last year, the prospect of thorough success was even less encouraging than it seemed to Secretary Taft in Ohio. It is, indeed, doubtful if a corrupt and degrading political system was ever so strongly entrenched as that which Senator Quay, on his death, bequeathed to his successors in the management of the Republican party and its Democratic annex in Pennsylvania. It possessed unlimited control of free transportation for all who would serve it, and the baneful influence of this source of corruption could hardly be exaggerated. It reached everywhere, and it alone was sufficient to hold to their allegiance to the bosses of both corrupt organiza-

tions many thousands of active workers in the party ranks. Even subordinate henchmen in unimportant districts were able to transport the families of their subordinates free of cost wherever they wished to go, while members of the city councils of Philadelphia and Pittsburg used this source of graft without limit, and often obtained tickets, not to be used for travel, but to be sold for their money value for the benefit of their retainers. Then, too, these organizations had entire control of the State treasury. By the corrupt use of the moneys of the State they had previously driven two cashiers to suicide, and at the psychological moment of the canvass of last year the third victim of their wrong-doing killed himself. It is believed that every depository of the State moneys poured money into their lap in return for the favors thus accorded.

They also had the entire force of national office-holders throughout the State, as they absolutely controlled their appointments to office; while the same fact was true of almost every office-holder within the State, ranging from the mayors of cities to the janitors of public buildings. They controlled the higher ranges of the public service as well, and almost all of the judges on the bench, State and national, owed their places to their favor. Meanwhile, what are called the financial interests were closely allied with them, because they held in their hands the giving or withholding of the franchises for public-service corporations, whether of greater or lesser value, many of which had been or might be chartered to rob the public under the thin disguise of watered securities.

In addition to all these sources of strength, the evil system had gradually grown up, as has been so fully shown in the insurance investigations of New York, of allowing corporations, no matter what was the business in which they were engaged, to make large contributions of money to political organizations at each recurring election; so that their treasuries were always overflowing, and they were thus enabled to make grants of money to their supporters whenever the occasion justified it. It can easily be imagined, therefore, how unassailable these serried cohorts of dishonest politicians of both parties, herded together for the single purpose of robbing the people, had become, and how distant seemed, even to the most hopeful spirits, the day when their destruction could be fairly expected. The contest was likely to

extend certainly over many years; and the main hope of success was in continued, and still continued, appeals to the innate moral sense of the voters, until the majority of them were convinced that the Eighth Commandment was of imperative obligation in politics as well as in all the other relations of life.

It was, therefore, with the greatest possible surprise that the victors in the contest of last year, within a week after their victory, learned that Governor Pennypacker, who had been chosen for that office by the late Senator Quay alone, and had been nominated and elected by these organizations in obedience to Senator Quay's commands, had called an extra session of the Legislature, and had indicated, among other subjects for legislation: an Act providing for a thorough reform in the management of the State treasury in the interest of the taxpayers; an Act providing for the personal registration of voters; an Act providing for the better government of large cities; and Acts abolishing fees and establishing fixed salaries in the offices of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Insurance Commissioner, both of which departments had been the objects of vigorous assault during the canvass.

It was at once seen, and with the greatest delight, that here was a beginning for such legislation as would at least tend to lessen some of the evils under which the people had been so long groaning without prospect of relief. We had hardly recovered from the agreeable surprise of this first important step, when the President and Directors of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company startled us still more agreeably by decreeing the drastic and absolute abolition of free transportation over their lines from December 31, 1905. As this action was promptly followed by the other railroads of the State, it was at once apparent that a most serious blow was thus struck at the system which had been so long assuming to itself the right to govern Pennsylvania as its members thought to be for their own personal interest. Indeed, it may well be doubted whether any step since taken has been so fruitful of advantage to the cause of honest politics as this action of the railroad companies in abolishing passes; for it at once reduced, with reference to transportation at least, every leader, as well as every henchman, of these organizations to the same level on which their fellow citizens stood; that is, each of them from the first day of January, 1906, would have to march to the ticket-office and buy his ticket and pay for it.

Before the delight at this action had fully subsided, Governor Pennypacker issued an additional proclamation, adding to the subjects for legislation at the special session: Laws to regulate the primary elections; to establish a civil-service system; to designate the uses to which moneys may be applied by candidates, political managers, and committees, in political campaigns, both for nominations and elections; and to require the managing committees and managers of all political parties to file, with a designated official, at the close of each campaign, a detailed statement in writing, accompanied by affidavits of the amounts collected and the purposes for which they were expended.

And now, at last, the good bark of State was started on a hopeful voyage, and it only remained to see how far the Legislature, when it met, would comply with the evident wishes of the Governor to meet the demands of the people for thoroughgoing and far-reaching reform legislation. For it must be remembered that the sincerity of the Legislature was even more thoroughly and more justly distrusted than that of the Governor had been. They had, indeed, but a few months before held high revel at the State Capitol, not only violating all the principles of sound and honest government, but violating them with an insolence which made their misconduct the harder to bear. It is not too much to say that they ran riot in legislative misconduct, and that it seemed as if there was no action looking to the plunder of the people, and to their further degradation while being plundered, which a majority of those legislators would not have enjoyed enacting.

The reformers, however, showed a practical sagacity in the presence of this crisis for which they cannot be too highly praised. Young men, new to the political field, acted as if they were trained veterans in politics; for, taking the Governor at his word and assuming that the Legislature would act upon his proclamations in good faith, they devoted themselves, in season and out of season, to the task of formulating the measures which he had indicated were to be the subjects of the session, so as to secure for the people the best possible results in case their enactment could be secured.

The story of their success is so astonishing as to be almost incredible. The extra session assembled at the State Capitol on January 15th, 1906, and adjourned thirty days thereafter; and yet, in that short interval it placed upon the statute-books laws

which have transformed the political life of Pennsylvania, by opening the avenues of political preferment to every man in the State who wishes to serve the public, and enabling him to appeal to the confidence of his fellow citizens, free from the slightest concession to any master. So that when they had adjourned, and the laws they had enacted had been approved by the Governor, the great blessing of government by the people had been restored to the citizens; and government by bosses had been obliterated, unless a majority of the voters prefer such government.

The first act of importance was an act for the better government of cities of the first class, which greatly strengthened the permanency of tenure of competent and faithful employees, by eliminating all political consideration; and then it enacted this drastic provision:

"No officer, clerk or employee of any city of the first class or of any department, trust or commission thereof, shall be a member of, or delegate or alternate to, any political convention, nor shall he be present at any such convention except in the performance of his official duty. No officer, clerk or employee of any city of the first class, or of any department, trust or commission thereof, shall serve as a member of, or attend the meetings of, any committee of any political party or take any active part in political management or in political campaigns, or use his office to influence political movements or influence the political action of any officer, clerk or employee of any such city department, trust or commission."

This cut up by the roots one of the most offensive manifestations of the power of the organizations, that of using for their own political purposes persons employed and paid to serve the public only; so that political conventions in Philadelphia and Pittsburg were, in many cases, as absolutely controlled by the office-holders as if no other citizens had a right to participate in them.

There had also long existed an odious system of assessing, by means of some of the employees, all the other employees of the cities of Pittsburg and Philadelphia such percentage of their salaries as the persons in control of the organizations chose to demand from them; and the next act of the Legislature struck down this abuse by enacting that:

"No officer, clerk or employee under the government of any city of the first class within this Commonwealth shall, directly or indirectly,

demand, solicit, collect or receive, or be in any manner concerned in demanding, soliciting, collecting or receiving, any assessment, subscription or contribution, whether voluntary or involuntary, intended for any political purpose whatever."

They next proceeded to lift the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, as they subsequently lifted that of the Insurance Commissioner, out of the realm of graft, by affixing to each office a definite, lawful salary, and requiring all other fees and perquisites of every kind whatever to be turned into the public treasury,—reforms which had been long vainly demanded.

The next act was of far greater importance than either of the preceding, and in itself alone would constitute a reversal of the base conditions under which the people of Pennsylvania have been living for more than a generation; for it provides a uniform method of electing, at primary elections, the officers of all parties and their delegates to State and national conventions, as well as of making nominations for public offices. It also provides for the payment of the expenses of these primary elections, and makes violations of its provisions misdemeanors, with adequate punishment therefor.

It will be seen, therefore, that nominating conventions are abolished. Such conventions had, in the early history of the country, faithfully served the purpose of fairly expressing the wishes of a majority of the voters of each party; but during the years in which political grafters had been consolidating their system, these gatherings had become mere instruments in their hands for giving nominations to such persons only as they knew would serve them without conscience and without question. And all classes of officials, from Senators of the United States down to coroners in counties, have been named in the same autocratic manner and with the same contemptuous disregard of the rights of the voters to be heard upon the subject. This system had so far eaten out the spirit of independence natural to the American breast that for years past hardly anybody seriously thought of offering himself as a candidate for any office in Pennsylvania, unless he could secure the support of the acknowledged masters of his party. With that support he was sure of nomination, and without it he knew he had no chance whatever of receiving it. The law under consideration has destroyed those conditions; and, after it takes effect, any citizen may freely appeal to his fellow



citizens for their support for any office in their gift; for, if a sufficient number of his fellow citizens indicate their preference for him at the primary elections, he will be the nominee of his party; and if not, he will have been given a free field and a fair fight, and that is all any honest man ought to ask.

The Act in question does not extend to the nomination of candidates for the United States Senate, but the State of Oregon has enacted an admirable and practicable law governing that subject, and there is no reasonable doubt that such a law will be presented at the next session of the Pennsylvania Legislature and will be adopted. Even, however, if no such law is passed, the voters at the primaries to nominate members of the Legislature, can express their preference for United States Senator, and their wishes would be sure to be respected. If that is done, every office in the gift of the voters of Pennsylvania will be restored to their own absolute control, if they see fit to exercise such control; and of course all free government depends, in the last analysis, upon the willingness of the citizens to give enough of their time and thought and labor to secure the best men for any office in their gift. All that legislation can do is to remove from their path the artificial obstacles to the expression of their will which the cunning and greed of professional politicians have so long interposed, and in Pennsylvania those obstacles are now removed.

The next subject with which the Legislature dealt was that of the scandals and suicides which had arisen from the partisan manipulation of the State treasury and the great funds at its disposal for deposit. Here, also, the members seem to have acted in good faith, and to have provided a reasonably safe and conservative measure for preventing those sacred funds from being hereafter, as they have been in the past, the plaything of the organizations, and of safeguarding them in the interest of the people to whom they belong.

They next turned their attention to providing a method for the personal registration of voters in all the considerable cities of the State, including cities of the first, second and third classes. The frauds at the elections in our great cities have long been a subject of cynical and contemptuous boasting by the members of both organizations. For more than a quarter of a century, they have simply treated the ballot-boxes as a means whereby they could provide any majority for any candidate, or for any proposi-

tion submitted to the voters which they thought desirable. Indeed, the history of frauds upon the ballot in Philadelphia, if ever compiled by those conversant with the subject, will present one of the most deplorable records in the history of human depravity. The ballot-box is to the good citizen what the communion-table is to the good Christian. It is a sacred thing. And yet for long years it has been polluted and degraded with an impudent cynicism which is beyond belief. By the Act in question, which is very carefully and elaborately drawn, the commission of any fraud upon the ballot-box for the future has been made so difficult, as well as so dangerous, as to make it an unprofitable occupation even for the most hardened criminal. The Act required the Governor to appoint, not later than June 15th, 1906, a Board of Registration Commissioners for each of said cities, and it is due to Governor Pennypacker to say that he has discharged this important duty in a manner which met the approval of every fair-minded citizen; for he selected gentlemen of unblemished character, fairly representative of each of the political parties; and it can hardly be doubted that hereafter each qualified elector in those cities will be allowed to vote once and once only, and to have his vote honestly counted, and none other than such qualified electors will be allowed to approach the polling-place.

Then, in due course, we reach another act of great public utility. It is an act to regulate nomination and election expenses, and to require an account of all such expenses to be filed, and providing penalties for any violation of its provisions. It is a careful and searching piece of legislation, clearly defining what expenses are admissible and excluding all others, and allowing, upon the demand of a proper number of electors, a public audit of any such expenditures. So that hereafter, if there is an adequate public spirit to enforce the provisions of the Act, which ought not to be doubted, nobody can use a dollar for an improper purpose in the State of Pennsylvania, to secure either his nomination or his election to any office.

The last Act in the series is, perhaps, of equal importance with any of the others; for it is an admirable Act, applying true, practical, sensible civil-service methods to all appointments to subordinate offices in the cities of Pittsburg and Philadelphia. It was very carefully drafted by gentlemen thoroughly familiar with

the subject, who have been for years vainly endeavoring to secure such legislation; and there is every guarantee, from the character of the members of the Civil Service Boards, that its provisions will be carried into full effect. To all persons who are familiar with the very great advantages which have accrued to the national service from the existence of the Civil Service Commission at Washington, it will be a source of unfeigned gratification that an Act similar in scope and purpose to the Act of Congress establishing that Commission has now lifted the subordinate employees of those great cities out of their degrading servitude to political masters, and placed them upon the plane of self-respecting servants of the public, with a tenure secured to them so long as they are capable of discharging their duties and devote themselves to those duties with proper assiduity.

Such, in brief outline, are the welcome and happy changes which have taken place in the political conditions in Pennsylvania since the present year began: first, the abolition of passes; then the placing of the offices of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Insurance Commissioner upon an honorable and honest basis of salary only; then an Act compelling the officers and employees of the great cities to attend to the duties for which they are paid by all the taxpayers, and to desist from meddling with politics and from taking any active part in political management or in political campaigns; then an Act prohibiting any officer, clerk or employee of such city from soliciting or receiving any assessment, subscription or contribution, whether voluntary or involuntary, intended for any political purpose whatever; then the invaluable Act abolishing nominating conventions, and providing for nominations at primary elections by the voters themselves and under the same safeguards as are provided for elections to office; then the Act to protect the State treasury from further depredations by politicians and conserving the public moneys to be used only in the public interest; then the Act providing for the personal registration of voters in all the considerable cities of the Commonwealth, so as to make tampering with the ballot-boxes or the casting of illegal votes so difficult, as well as so dangerous, as to be practically unprofitable, if not absolutely impossible; then the Act regulating the expenditures of any candidate for either nomination or election and containing this most important provision:

"No officer of any corporation, whether incorporated under the laws of this or any other State, or any foreign country, except corporations formed for political purposes, shall pay, give or lend, or authorize to be paid, given or lent, any money or other valuable thing belonging to such corporation to any candidate or to any political committee for the payment of any election expenses whatever."

Finally, came the Act to regulate and improve the civil service of the cities of Pittsburg and Philadelphia, making violation of its provisions a misdemeanor and providing penalties for such violation.

Surely, it is not too much to say that these laws, taken together and in connection with the abolition of passes by the railroad companies, have effected what may be fairly called a political transformation in Pennsylvania. It is, of course, very likely that errors or omissions will be discovered in some or all of these laws sufficiently grave to require additional legislation, and great care ought therefore to be observed by the voters when deciding upon the persons to whom shall be committed the government of the State, in both its executive and legislative departments; for none but sincere friends of honest politics ought to be entrusted with any office whatever. These admirable laws, indeed, like most other good things in this world, are not automatic, and they will require the self-denying patriotism of all good citizens, in season and out of season, to make them thoroughly effective. Their mere enactment, however, has already had a most excellent effect upon the politics of the Commonwealth.

The platforms presented to the voters for their choice by all the parties soliciting their suffrage this fall are of an admirable character, professing allegiance to excellent principles of government, and demanding the enactment of such additional legislation as the public interest may seem to require; and upon those platforms each party has nominated unexceptionable candidates; so that for the first time for many years, in the political history of Pennsylvania, it may be truly said that every ticket presents the names of gentlemen who can be supported by their fellow citizens with reasonable faith that, if elected, they will discharge the duties committed to them free from allegiance to any master, and with a view only to the interests of the public as they understand them. It is, therefore, in very truth, a return to government by the people, but the people must take care of their own

government. They must attend the primary elections, and exercise their choice among the candidates; and they must attend the elections themselves, to discharge their duty as good citizens by voting for such candidates as they believe best represent the true welfare of the great State of which they ought to be again proud to be electors.

The years which bring the philosophic mind bring also a sense of proportion and a serenity of spirit which enable one to cast all personal ambitions and all personal animosities into "the limbo of forgotten things." In discussing, therefore, the subject of this paper, if any expressions which appear to be unduly strong have found their way into it, they are inspired, not by ill feeling towards individuals, but only by that hatred of political corruption which has had more or less complete possession of the writer all his life. There is not a person in any degree responsible for the evils which are herein condemned whose political advancement, if honestly and fairly won in an open field and a fair fight, would give rise to any criticism, except criticism of the electors for the lack of wisdom in their choice. But now that the field is open and the fight is fair, it is for the voters to choose the candidates they prefer, and they will do so.

These great reforms have come so suddenly that it is not easy to believe in their existence or, if they exist, in their beneficence; but there they are and they speak for themselves. It is true that they have come too late to be of service to many of the veteran fighters in the cause of honest politics; but, happily, they have come in time to enable some of the elders and all younger men to challenge the judgment of an unbossed and unbought electorate upon their fitness for the offices to which they aspire. Such a consummation is an ample recompense for all past labors, arduous and seemingly hopeless as they were, and its blessings are fitly recognized only by reverently thanking God that we have been spared as free men to again salute the free Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

WAYNE MAC VEAGH.